

BIBLE SERVITUDE.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

APPLETON-ST. CHURCH, LOWELL,

ON THE DAY OF ANNUAL THANKSGIVING,

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"The entrance of Thy Word giveth light." Psalm 119: 130.

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S E R M O N .

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Coloss. 3 : 22 and 4 : 1.

“ Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. . . . Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

It is the glory of this age, that human wickedness and human misery are sought out and exposed for the purpose of reformation and relief. The claims of religion are presented, not as dogmas, or as painful, or splendid ceremonies, but as great practical principles, operating upon man in all his relations, enterprises and prospects, and designed to put this world into a state of peace, love and happiness. The import of that declaration of the prophet seems to be apprehended, when he says, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn.”

Within a few years, these feelings have led to much enquiry and discussion on the subject of Slavery. Its wrongs and its cruelties have awakened human sympathy and christian benevolence, and rendered it one of the most exciting topics of the age. In the arguments for and against the system of Slavery, frequent appeals have been made to the Bible. One party have employed it to justify, and the other to condemn ; and as the Bible is our only safe guide on the great principles of morality, and its decisions should put an end to all strife, it is important for us all to obtain correct and clear views of its instructions, on a subject in which such mighty interests are involved.

For this purpose, I propose to present the substance of divine instructions on the subject of Slavery. In doing this, I remark,

I. THAT THE BIBLE EVIDENTLY ALLOWS SOMETHING LIKE A SYSTEM OF SERVITUDE.

Slavery has existed in some form, from a very early period of the world. It is not peculiar to the later generations. If not before, it existed very soon after the flood, not merely in an obscure manner, so as not to attract attention, but it was among the most public transactions and events of the world. It was prevalent and notorious. Abraham and his sons, with the most conspicuous characters of that age had servants, or slaves,\* and every generation since has maintained Slavery in some form. The subject is often alluded to throughout the Bible, but Slavery is nowhere positively forbidden. Men are not forbidden to be servants, or to have servants. No expressions can be found, which can rationally be construed as positively prohibitory. The relation of master and servant is spoken of in the Old Testament and in the New, as being very common, and nowhere has the pen of inspiration recorded a veto.

But, that the system is allowed in some form, and, in view of human nature, and the circumstances of human existence, deemed necessary, is further evident from the instructions which are given to regulate it. If the object had been at once to destroy, no efforts would have been made to regulate. The duty of the master and servant would have been simply, to dissolve the relation. They would have had no further responsibility under those names. Obedience to God would no longer have been connected with previous titles and obligations. As it is, they are each of them charged in reference to the continued relation. The master and servant are solemnly charged as such, and their obligations are rendered mutual and conditionally permanent. No sin of the world is rebuked with more pungency and terror, than the sin of

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\* In this discourse I use the words Slave and Slavery as synonymous with Servant and Servitude. I am aware that a different signification may be attached to the former words; but, as the same original word may be, and is, translated by both these words, I have chosen to use them in their similar signification, not intending to attach the worst sense to the word Slave, according to present usage.

oppression. It is the great and prevalent sin of the world, and calls loudly for divine vengeance. The instructions given to master and servant, therefore, carry the supposition, that such a relation may exist without oppression, and without sin; and they are intended to render it not only innocent but profitable and happy to both. It is spoken of in connection with other important relations, such as husband and wife, parent and child, showing that it *may* be innocent and profitable. On the same principle, that a man may put himself under the protection and control of another for a few days, he may for a longer time. He may prefer that situation to one of more immediate personal responsibility.

II. WHILE THE BIBLE EVIDENTLY ALLOWS OF SLAVERY IN SOME FORM, IT IMPOSES SUCH RESTRICTIONS UPON IT, AS TO PREVENT IT FROM BEING A SYSTEM OF OPPRESSION.

1. *The Bible gives the slave, or servant, rights as a man, or as a human and immortal being.* Though in one instance he is called property, inasmuch as his strength and life may be profitable to the master, yet he is invested with claims as a man. The master and servant have mutual claims. They are both charged in reference to each other. The servant is not the chattel of the master, like other property. He may be used, but he has a voice in regard to the manner in which he shall be used. He is not constituted a dumb and involuntary being. The law was made for him, not only to govern, but to protect. He could appeal to it to secure a right, or a privilege. His servitude was made conditional. Every claim of the master had a corresponding claim of the servant. This will appear evident by a more specific view of his privileges. I remark, therefore,

2. *That severe abuse at once destroyed all the claims of the master, and of course, terminated all the obligations of the slave.*

“If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his handmaid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake. And if he smite out his man-servant’s tooth, or his maid-servant’s tooth, he shall let him go free for his teeth’s sake.” The rational construction of this provision is, that any such abuse as permanently disfigured, or disabled the servant entitled him to freedom. The contract of service might have been voluntary, strong and permanent; but it was dissolved by abuse. A mark of abuse was

a certificate of freedom. The *contract* did not imply the right to exercise cruelty and oppression.

3. *The servant was entitled to the instructions and privileges of the family.* "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." Gal. 4: 1. The rite of circumcision was a religious rite. It was a token of something which was to be learned by instruction. In itself it conveyed no religious intelligence, and the parent was bound to explain to the child what it meant. When it was enjoined upon Abraham he was instructed by God, and the command to circumcise his children and his servants, implied the obligation to teach them. The children and the servants were put under the same privileges. The command was, He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised, and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

In the feast of weeks the servants were to partake with the family. In reference to this it is said, And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there. And thou shalt remember, that thou wert a bondman in Egypt, and thou shalt observe and do these statutes. Deut. 16: 11, 12.

The laws and the privileges of the Sabbath extended to servants. "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Ex. 20: 10.

These laws were evidently intended to secure to the servant a religious education. He was to be trained as a subject of the divine government, and allowed the privileges of an immortal being. He was not to be treated simply as property, or as an inferior animal, but as a member of the human family,—a fellow traveller through the world, and responsible to the same tribunal.

4. *The servant was entitled to a just compensation for his services.\** "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and

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\* We are not to suppose, that just compensation must consist of such

equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." This injunction may extend to property, and every thing pertaining to the interests of the slave. It amounts to the same, as that precept of our Savior, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The slave has the same right in chancery, that the master has. All his interests are to be consulted as a social and immortal being. The question is not what he *can* bear, or what he *will* bear; but what is it *right* for him to bear. The divine constitution admits no enactments in opposition to this great rule, and no man is obligated to obey such enactments, if they do exist. It is the Bible condition of servitude, that the slave shall have what is just and equal. It is invariably the implied condition of the contract, and of the continuance of the relation. A disregard of this on the part of the master releases the slave from his obligation. The contract is broken. The servant is obligated to toil no longer than the master gives him what is just and equal.

The want of power in the slave to enforce this demand, and compel the master to his duty, so far from justifying a refusal, only renders the oppression more aggravated. It would more fully justify the servant in leaving his place, than if he had power to compel a fulfilment of the conditions. The primary object of all these instructions is to prevent oppression, where it is most liable to exist. The servants are supposed to be the poor and the comparatively helpless party, and they are guarded on every side by divine authority, and are peculiarly encouraged to call upon God in their distresses.

5. *Another important restriction upon Slavery is, that the fugitive slave shall not be compelled to return to his master.* "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him." Deut. 23: 15. This prohibition is founded on a principle which is expressed in the

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daily wages as might be deemed right in temporary employment, where the employer is not responsible for the sickness and old age of the laborer. But compensation is what shall be an inducement for cheerful labor. The servant is to have a voice in it, as a rational being, and be so held, that he may seek a better place.

constitution of the United States, and of the several States, that men shall be protected in their efforts for prosperity and happiness. The prohibition supposes, that the servant was not properly treated by his master, or he would not wish to leave him. He has a right to seek for a better place.

This prohibition places the whole subject in a new light. It shows us, that involuntary bondage cannot be allowed.\* Under this restriction, no one can be compelled to remain in bondage unless he thinks it will on the whole be better for him to remain. His master cannot compel him to return. Every creature on earth is forbidden to assist the master in such compulsion. He can cause him to return, only by such proposals as create in-

\* Perhaps no term in our language is more difficult to define, when applied to human relations, than the word *voluntary*.

In its highest sense it is not applicable to finite beings, and in regard to such, it must always be used loosely.

We compel our children and youth to obey the laws of the Commonwealth, without their direct assent, and we give them the protection of the government without definite stipulation. Yet we speak of a social compact in regard to civil government, as if all had a voice in the arrangement, and a choice in regard to obedience.

So it may be with one born under servitude; and we would give him the same liberty, when he arrives to manhood, that the disaffected citizen has, to leave his country and seek a better one.

I use the word contract, not in its strictest sense, but as expressing a relation generally understood.

If a servant can free himself from this relation by absconding, without being liable to a forced return, then his remaining may be considered voluntary. And we may say generally, that a man acts voluntarily when he is not forcibly prevented from employing his own powers for his own good, so far as he honestly can; or when he can have a voice in deciding how he shall be used and governed. In this sense, under Bible restrictions, a state of servitude may be a voluntary state, as fully as that of submission to civil government.

Seldom does any man have more than a *secondary* choice, in regard to his station and circumstances in the world. According to the old adage, he must do as he *can*, when he cannot do as he *would*. While he is not forcibly prevented from seeking his own good and employing his powers to the best advantage, according to his own judgment, he may be said to act voluntarily.

If he employs his powers to the injury of the Commonwealth, it may rightfully interfere and deprive him of liberty.

ducement. The slave is really free, when he has eloped, and can be bound again only by a new contract. He is left freely to his own choice. Like multitudes of other poor, or I may say, like all the human family, he may not be able to obtain just such a situation as he would like; but he may have his choice, whether to return into bondage, or take the best situation which he can obtain without.

Take this law in connection with one other, relative to obtaining slaves, and it is a preventive to involuntary servitude. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hands, he shall surely be put to death." Stealing a man is taking him by craft, or by force without his own consent. Every man, unless he has by crime forfeited the rights of a man, belongs to himself. He can be lawfully purchased of nobody else. If he has given himself up to the control and disposal of one man, that man may put him to another, and then if he does not like to remain he may abscond, and no power can rightfully compel his return. Slaves were often taken by conquest in war. It was the general expectation that such consequences would follow, and it was of course not considered stealing to take them in this way. It was a public trial of strength, permitted as a scourge for wickedness; but even then, if the captives escaped, they could not be returned to their several purchasers, or owners.\*

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\* We cannot but notice the mercy of God toward the poor in regard to the dissolving of the relation. The servant may escape, if he finds himself badly treated; but no provision is made whereby the master can dissolve the relation. He may give the servant permission, but he cannot compel him to leave. The poor servant might be left thus in a forlorn condition, to be thrown out helpless upon the world. The vigorous and enterprising servant might improve his condition by escaping; but if so easy and ready a dissolution were permitted, on the part of the master, the enfeebled and aged servant might be thrown into fearful suffering. If the servitude is understood to be for life, the master is bound to sustain the servant to the end, whatever may be his condition in regard to the ability of compensatory labor.

In view of this, the state of servitude does not appear so forbidding, compared with a state of more responsibility. What painful anxiety often attends a state of poverty, debility and approaching old age. Much as we dread a state of servitude, we can see the mercy of God in allowing this state, in view of all its restrictions.



But if all these restrictions should be so evaded as not to prevent permanent involuntary bondage, another provision was made to prevent oppression.

6. *Every half century there was a year of jubilee, in which universal freedom was to be proclaimed.* Every contract of servitude was now at an end. No stipulation could bind one beyond this. Every seventh year was a year of release to all Jewish servants, except those, who had chosen to sell themselves for life, and received the token of perpetual bondage. Deut. 15: 17, 18. But the privileges of the jubilee were universal. Every man could now commence life anew, so far as contracts of servitude were concerned. Every servant was like the young man who has completed his minority, and goes out into the world to act for himself.

But the Hebrew servant was not to go out simply free. The command was, And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty; thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him. Deut. 15: 12.

These restrictions were not merely nominal. The Lawgiver was not indifferent in regard to their observance. One great cause of the calamities, which the nation suffered, was their disregard of these regulations. In reference to the seventh year of release the prophet says; Therefore, thus saith the Lord; ye have not harkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor; behold I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. Jer. 34.

While Slavery was allowed under all these restrictions, it is very evident that it was not allowed as a system of cruelty and oppression. God has never sanctioned unrighteous gain, or oppression. He has allowed men to sustain different relations to each other for the interest of the whole, but not for covetousness. All relations and regulations of Church and State, which must be sustained by oppression, or which build up one on the ruin of another, are wrong. One may have a faculty of becoming what another cannot, and occupying a different station in the world; but this gives him no right to oppress, or to deal unjustly, or unkindly, with one of the least of all God's creatures.

And here we ought to notice the kindness of God for the poor and the dependent, shown to another class of servants. "Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant, that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land, within thy gates; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee." The poor and the oppressed, the widow and the fatherless, the afflicted and the stranger, have peculiar encouragement to resort to God, as their friend and protector, and their cries are to be feared by the oppressor, whatever relation he may sustain. God, in the movements of his providence, and in the decisions of his tribunal, is against him. He cannot expect mercy, who has shown no mercy.

From this view of the instructions of the Bible on the subject of Slavery, we are led to the enquiry, whether the efforts of this day against it, are righteously and wisely directed.

We have looked upon the abominations of the system, as it is now sustained, and our heart's blood has boiled, in view of the unrighteousness and cruelty which is manifest. With righteous indignation we have cried out, away with such a system from the earth! Let the name and the relation be annihilated forever. The terms which we have proposed to the slave-holder, have been immediate and entire emancipation. The system as it exists is abhorrent to all the feelings of justice and humanity, and we have not hesitated to call it sinful in the extreme. Our efforts have been aimed directly at its annihilation. We have not said much about *modification*. It has appeared too bad to be mended, and we have insisted upon having it cast away. This has been the point of conflict; and we have mourned, that the conflict has been no more successful. We have seen many things to deplore in the management of the struggle. Many who enlisted have been turned aside to vain jangling; and we have been led seriously to enquire, whether we had discovered and adopted the appropriate method of warfare. We have presented the great principles of the Bible as the foundation of our opposition to the system, and as the argument against its continuance. We have been met by the argument, that the Bible admits a system of Slavery, and gives many instructions to regulate it. Our argument

for entire and immediate emancipation on this ground has been warded off, and the whole subject has assumed more the character of party contention, than of benevolent and reforming effort. Is there not something erroneous in the premises? Instead of aiming directly at emancipation, should we not rather aim at modification? Should we not rather oppose the evils, than to oppose Slavery itself? If it cannot exist without these evils, then opposing them will be in effect opposing Slavery. But the effort would assume a different aspect. The argument would have a different bearing upon the mind and conscience of the slave-holder. We might gain a hearing where now every door is shut. We might show the evil to be not in the relation itself, but in the treatment of the relation. We might show the slave-holder, that he is guilty not simply for holding slaves, but for holding them in the manner he does. We might attack his conscience not upon *original sin*, but upon actual transgression, and show him where the laws of Jehovah were out against him. Instead of contending with him about the theory, where he might find some advantage, we could turn his attention at once to the practical abominations. Instead of insisting, that the diseased limb should be at once amputated, we might employ our power to engage him in some effectual efforts for remedy. We might show him that danger and death impended.

Suppose my brother has fallen into the guilt and the calamity of the present system of slave-holding; and in view of its abominations, which my soul cannot endure, I conjure him to abandon it immediately. I tell him, that it would be better not to live, than to live under such guilt and portending vengeance. I present the precepts of the gospel, and the coming wrath of God, which is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as the foundation of the argument.

He deliberately turns to me and says, that the Bible allows him to sustain this relation, and he refers me to the places where it is authorized by the precepts of regulation. He uses my authority for his own justification. My first onset is repulsed, and I must change my mode of attack. I say to him then, you acknowledge the authority of the Bible to be decisive in this matter, and under that authority you intend to act? He assents, and binds himself to abide the decision. Show me, says he, where it is forbidden, and I will yield. Let the Lord reign. I

then say, if the Bible is our authority in regard to the relation itself, it is also our authority in regard to all its regulations. Are you willing to submit at once to all the restrictions, which infinite wisdom and benevolence have imposed, and treat with your servants accordingly? Again he assents, for he would not seem to disown divine authority in anything. Now he is well committed, and I begin at Genesis and go through the Bible, explaining the restrictions and obligations of Slavery, something as I have in this discourse, and ask him whether he will at once so far change his system, as to conform to all these regulations. Will you hold and deal with your slaves fully and practically according to these rules?

Here my brother hesitates, and his loyalty to God is put to the test. He thinks of the practical effect of some of these rules, and begins to say, I can hardly see how our domestic institutions can be maintained under such restrictions. They give our servants so much liberty and so many privileges, that I cannot see how we can keep them, and have them profitable. I reply, that these are not the points of argument. The Bible has regulated all the Slavery which it allows. It is not my concern how Slavery can be perpetuated, or how it can be rendered profitable; but how the Bible requires us to manage it. Whether it lives, or dies, under the divine treatment, is not the important question. Let the wisdom of Providence settle this point. The system needs a mighty change, and just such a change, as the restrictions of the Bible would cause. I would have you cleave to the authority, to which you have referred, and free yourself from the guilt, the condemnation and the ruin of oppression. I conjure you to study the divine oracles, and under the guardianship of the God of hosts, to trust yourself to the results of obedience. As a brother I must plead with you, and keep your conscience awake with the thunders of truth, until those cries of oppression cease to rise from your domain and ascend to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. In all the argument and all the effort, I will most tenaciously cleave to your own premises. I will not urge you to emancipate your slaves, but I will point out to you the errors of your treatment, and urge you to such changes, as the divine oracles immediately demand.

Though this mode of conflict with the sin of Slavery may have the same great results, it is easy to see, that it is very different from that which has been prevalent. It leads the slave-holder

to a different view of the subject, and shows him what and where his guilt is. It takes away many of his excuses and apologies, and shows him how he can at once remove the burden of his guilt. It places him upon his individual responsibility.

The view of Slavery which we have taken, may assist some who are in the midst of legal slave-holding, in deciding on a course of duty. There are not a few in the midst of the slave-holding states, who would gladly be free from their present connexion with Slavery; but as the general laws are, they know not how to deliver themselves. If they emancipate their slaves, they cannot remain unmolested with them, but are liable to be brought into a worse state by their freedom. They have not the means, or the power, of removing them to a more desirable place, nor can they at once change the laws of the commonwealth where they reside. What shall they do? How shall they deliver themselves from the guilt of the slave-holder, under the present system? Let them go directly to the Bible for relief. Let them at once adopt the treatment, which that enjoins, and retain their servants to protect and bless them. Let them examine all these precepts, and compare their present treatment with these injunctions, and in whatever they find themselves erring from divine instruction, let them at once change their action, and allow their servants every privilege, which God has enjoined.

And if under such treatment their servants abscond, or for any reason leave them, let them go. Send not the blood-hounds after them, neither summon assistance to compel their return. They are not entitled to your protection, nor subject to your control. Their return must be founded on a new and a mutual contract. If they have no good reason for leaving you—if your treatment has so come up to the claims of the divine government, that they had no good reason for dissatisfaction, the fault is theirs, and you are clear of responsibility. In this way you may have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, while you are a slave-holder. You may avoid the guilt of oppression, and the displeasure of God for the crime. You may make a good home for the slave, and render to him that which is just and equal, so that his obedience shall be a blessing to himself and to you.

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\* See Isaiah 1 : 16, 17.

The view of the subject which we have taken shows us what our duty is in regard to one subject, which has been a matter of much controversy. What should be done with absconding slaves? Some of the laws of men would compel us to deliver them up to their former masters, and even assist in compelling their return. I would honor the laws of my country in all cases where they do not clash with the laws of God. Civil government is a great blessing under the authority of the divine constitution. But here is a case, where the government has transcended its legitimate limits, and dared to enact laws in opposition to one of the plain statutes of the Almighty; and here we should obey God rather than man. God has forbidden us to return the fugitive slave. Until his statute is publicly repealed, no opposite statute can be obligatory. We have appealed to the God of armies to deliver us from oppression, and thus acknowledge him to be our Sovereign. His statutes are older, and have a prior claim to all other ordinances. Allegiance to Him is prior to all other allegiance; and when we are called upon to deliver up the fugitive, and assist in renewing his bondage, we have high authority for refusing. We need not hesitate. We may have a clear conscience in the matter. He is to have a place among us if he chooses, and like any other of our fellow creatures he has a claim upon our humanity and protection. We are under no more obligation to return him to his former master, than we are to give him to the hungry lion. If we are called to suffer on this account, from the usurpation of human legislators, we do not suffer for evil doing.

This subject shows us that our efforts in regard to Slavery should be in the strictest sense *christian* efforts. The Bible is our authority and our guide. We have nothing to do with any vague speculations about human rights, or political economy; nothing to do with the spirit of the age, or the peculiarity of any race, or climate. The laws about Slavery are definite and simple. We are to open the statute book of heaven before the slave-holder, and reason with him out of the scriptures. We are to reason, as those who are going with him to the judgment, being interested together to know what awaits us there. I know, that humanity has her claims, and civil institutions have their obligations; but they must be subservient to divine authority. Under the spirit and precepts of this authority we can do all which we

are required to do against the evils of Slavery, and thus guided, we can have the strongest hope of success and eventual triumph. Satan will not cast out Satan; and no schemes of human contrivance and carnal ambition will ever deliver our world from the guilt and the miseries of oppression. It is beyond the reach of carnal weapons, and must be annihilated by those energies which move under a heavenly panoply, and under the sceptre of Zion's King.

We cannot conceive of a more ready method of relief to the millions of slaves in our own country, in view of their real circumstances, than this subject presents. They are now in a congenial climate, and they know no other home. With their tears, their sweat and their blood they have purchased a long inheritance in that land. They have a mortgage upon the soil, the record of which may be found in the archives of heaven, and there is not wealth enough in all the country to redeem it. They are entitled to a permanent and happy home there.

How can their present miseries be sooner relieved, or how can they sooner be raised from their painful and unrighteous degradation, than by the application of Bible principles? Let the relation continue, but let it be under the regulations and restrictions of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Let the master become the kind and faithful guardian of the slave, and bless himself in blessing his servant and obeying his God.\* He is under

\* Did my limits permit, it would be interesting to notice the happy change which would be produced, by a mode of treatment regulated by the Bible.

Slavery is now a most miserable system for both parties. The slave fears the master, and the master fears the slave. In many cases they live under painful apprehensions. The system is impoverishing to individuals and to the great community. The very earth is cursed under the burden, and in the nature of things will not long sustain it.

Let the wisdom of God regulate the system, and its desolating effects will cease. This tormenting fear will be removed, feelings of friendship and words of kindness will sweeten life, and toils encouraged by adequate, or satisfactory compensation will renew the face of the earth, and enrich the plantations. Kindness begets kindness, and manly treatment produces manhood. In this case it would be found true, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Abraham's servants could not have been in a very miserable condition.

solemn responsibility to provide for those who are thus thrown under his control according to their immediate and permanent necessities. He has no right to cast them away. These millions are now in a state somewhat resembling the feebleness of minority. They need parental solicitude and protection. The Bible calls upon the master at once to take off the hand of oppression, and throw around them the arm of parental guardianship. They cannot be enlightened and elevated at once. It is a work of time to place them where they ought to be. But under the guidance of the divine laws, they may at once be relieved from the severity of their afflictions. Their toils may be compensated, not only by what is just and equal in regard to property, but by such care and oversight as humanity and godliness demand. Thus, while the relation of master and servant may continue, the yoke of bondage may be made easy, and the burden light. One change would prepare the way for another, and the condition of both parties be rendered more and more desirable. The Bible is a safe guide in this matter.

Some of the existing laws of the slave States are embarrassing to a course of justice and mercy, and they would prevent one from doing all immediately, which a benevolent mind would de-

The strongest mutual confidence existed, and in their training they were qualified for high commissions, and great responsibilities.

To illustrate the influence of good treatment upon the profit of labor, I wish to state an important fact in regard to the manufacturing interests of this city. Cloth can be made cheaper here than in England. That is, it can be afforded for a less price in the market, than the same kind of cloth manufactured there. Yet our laborers are paid a much higher rate of wages. We account for this fact, in part, by the *character* of our operatives. Our wages command persons of intelligence, and mechanical skill and ingenuity. The study and the effort are to make more and better cloth with the same strength and time. In England the mass of the operatives are like a part of the machinery,—half paid, half fed, half clothed, and half dying all their lifetime. Here the operatives govern the machinery, live well and put money into the bank for old age, while the capitalists are enriched by their labors. So much for employing men instead of things, and so much for regulations to elevate character.

So it would be in the slave holding States. By acting according to divine instructions, those who are now becoming poor, whose plantations are withering and declining under the blight and curse of oppression, might be growing rich, and preparing a fertile inheritance for their heirs.



sire. But they need not prevent a great change, in the system; and such a change too, as would lead to the annulment of unrighteous statutes. Every master may begin to do right, and yield himself to the government of God, with the hope, that obstacles will be removed as he progresses, until he shall be the happy patriarch of a happy household, dependent upon servants, who are dependent upon him.

This leads us to notice more particularly what that system of servitude is, and how it originates, which is free from the sin of oppression, and sanctioned by divine authority. In all conditions of society, it is common for men to put themselves for a season in the employment and under the control of another, rather than attempt the management of business for themselves. The contract may in this case be for a stipulated sum, or for sustenance during the time. Such an one is called a *hired* servant. On the same great principle a man may prefer to give himself up during life. He may have found that he is poorly qualified to manage for himself, and prefer to yield himself to the management of another. The permission of servitude under the benevolent government of God, supposes, that such differences in faculty exist, that it may be a blessing to one to be led by another. With a servitude under Bible restrictions, multitudes might be more comfortable than they now are. But such is the tendency of depraved men to oppression, that this relation is very liable to be abused, and so we find it guarded by restrictions on every side. It is allowed for the comfort, and not for the oppression of the poor. When it is abused, the obligations of the servant cease, but guilt and condemnation are upon the oppressor, whatever relation he sustains.\*

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\* We very naturally enquire what the effect of the system here proposed would be upon the slave trade. Great efforts have already been made to prevent this, but they are not yet so successful as we hoped. As long as the spirit of oppression and cruelty is cherished, no legislation—no physical force can prevent it. The man who is disposed to treat his servants well,—whose habits are regulated by the instructions of the Bible, will not resort to any wrong methods to obtain them. In all business and under all circumstances, a man who uses his help well, will not find it difficult to obtain help. The abominations of the slave trade are perpetuated by the prevalent and popular abuse of the slave. So far as we can reform one we shall prevent the other. Our first and great effort should be to soften and subdue by the power of the gospel the hard hearts

The government of Great Britain did a noble act, in proclaiming liberty to her distant captives, and putting them out of the immediate power of the oppressor. But that government would do a still nobler act by providing for her millions of ragged, starving and helpless population, on whose necks the Hierarchy and the Nobility are riding in luxury and triumph, though they are not called slaves. Happy would it be for them, if they had some protectors, responsible for their comfort, though they might be called masters, acting under the merciful restrictions of the Most High. Under such a system the poor outcasts would be better instructed, better fed, and better clothed and lodged, than they now are.

This subject shows us, that in the view of God, guilt is not confined to certain names, or relations, but depends upon the actions of men under these relations. Hardly any name is associated in our minds with higher guilt, or with greater moral loath-

of men, from which all the abominations of Slavery and the slave trade proceed.

I would not withdraw from the ocean the powers, which are arrayed against the slave trade. I would rather increase and invigorate them; but I would not confide in them alone. Let moral power be applied against all oppression, let the laws of God be applied to every human relation, and men in all circumstances will be blessings to each other.

Here it should be considered, that our responsibility and our efforts relative to Slavery are very different from what they would be if the system had just commenced, or had been introduced by the present masters. We might call upon them to undo what they had done, in regard to removing the race from their native home. Or were we now called upon to decide, whether it should be introduced, we should not hesitate in the decision. Probably the great majority of the slave holders would say, *no*. But here it is, handed down from past generations, and all the way attended with great wrongs and great miseries. We cannot remedy past wrongs, nor can we throw them all upon this generation. We must take things as they are, and let our inquiry be, What shall we do to remove the evils, or to prevent their continuance. As they are, what shall be done for the master and the slave, or what shall the master and the slave do? Deploring and censuring the past will not be a remedy for the present. We gain nothing by discussion, unless we can come to practical conclusions, and be able to tell men what is right, what is possible and what is expedient—what course will now promote most effectually the interests of the slaves and their masters. They will be blessed together, or they will be cursed together.

someness than the name of Slavery. It presents to our view scenes of cruelty and misery most revolting to the soul. It makes us tremble for the coming doom of multitudes of our race. And yet under a relation thus named there may not be high crime. Under the divine restrictions, it may be profitable and happy for all concerned. The servant may love his freedom from responsibility, and think it an easy way through the world, to be led and provided for by another.

On the other hand the guilt of oppression may be found where no such names are used. The poor, the weak, and the forsaken are found all over the world, and where there is a heart to oppress, there is an opportunity, without offensive names, or alarming exhibitions. Under plausible pretenses, that heart may give itself infernal indulgence, and swell the tide of human woe. But that heart God will detect, whether it be at the North or the South, the East, or the West, and mark it for the signal displays of righteous indignation.

Thus, my brethren, I have presented to you my views of Slavery according to the Bible. I am aware that some of them are new, and may at first appear alarming. I have not come to them without prayerful investigation. My soul desires to do something for the relief of the poor slave. The prevalent efforts seem to me to be in a great degree ineffectual, and to give prospect of little good. I have thrown myself anew upon the oracles of God, to be led by infinite wisdom to a more effectual and excellent way. I would gladly do more than I have ever done to mitigate the woe, and relieve the oppression of this wicked world; and I would be girt about with a heavenly panoply. I believe, that God's word is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, and making this world an abode of righteousness, peace, and joy. Let its sacred pages be the law of my trial, in your judgment, as they will be in the great day.

I ask your candid and devout investigation of this subject. We have something to do. Search the scriptures, and abide their decision. Be ready for the conflict which they enjoin, though it may last till we die; and may God lead us to do more and better than we have ever done.